

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 SAJ-01 /082 W

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R 191306Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5646

INFO AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

UNCLAS BRUSSELS 11395

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SEDU, XT, BE

SUBJECT: LABOR COMMON FRONT CALLS ONE HOUR NATION WIDE GENERAL STRIKE TO PROTEST SOCIAL AND HEALTH BUDGET MEASURES

REF: BRUSSELS 11046

1. TWO NATIONAL LABOR UNIONS (FGTB AND CSC) MET AS COMMON FRONT DECEMBER 16 AND AGREED CALL ON HOUR WARNING STRIKE IN ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISES DECEMBER 23 TO PROTEST PROGRAM LAW MEASURES REDUCING SOCIAL ALLOWANCES AND INCREASING HEALTH COSTS FOR WORKERS. THIS LAW WAS PASSED BY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DECEMBER 13 (REFTEL) AFTER LABOR-INSPIRED AMENDMENTS ON THESE SUBJECTS WERE REJECTED.

2. COMMON FRONT HELD PRESS CONFERENCE DECEMBER 18 TO EXPLAIN REASONS FOR CALLING THIS STRIKE. THEY SAID GOVERNMENT HAD IGNORED THEIR DECEMBER 9 CALL FOR REVISION OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SECTIONS OF THIS PROGRAM LAW. THEY PARTICULARLY CRITICIZED GOVERNMENT'S 10 BILLION BF (DOLS 2.5 MILLION) REDUCTION IN BUDGET SUBSIDY TO SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM.

3. COMMENT: THIS STRIKE IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE IT IS FIRST TIME COMMON FRONT HAS EVER CALLED NATION-WIDE GENERAL STRIKE

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AND BECAUSE OF QUASI-POLITICAL NATURE OF THIS ACTION. THIS

ACTION ALSO INDICATES GROWING TENSION BETWEEN SOCIAL CHRISTIAN
PARTY AND CHRISTIAN TRADE UNION (CSC) OVER SPICAL POLICY AS
TINDEMANS GOVERNMENT STRUGGLES TO HOLD DOWN GROWING BUDGET
DEFICIT. HOWEVER WE DO NOT FORESEE A POLITICAL BREAK BETWEEN
TINDEMANS AND HOUTHUYS.
FIRESTONE

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